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Compliments of the Author

Westbrook

By Jesse Fry
LAUREATE OF WESTHAVEN

Three Miles West of Richmond, Va.
1913

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RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO
"CRICKET" AND "THE LITTLE GOLD DUST TWINS"

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METRIC DESCRIPTION OF THE ELEGANT COUNTRY HOME OF THE LATE MAJOR LEWIS GINTER

NOW OCCUPIED AS A PRIVATE SANATORIUM

Here's a garland for old Westbrook—
For its Doctors and Attendants,
For its Nurses—in the Mansion—
For its Helpers—white and colored—
For its morbid and dejected,
For its nervous and dyspeptic,
For its weak, afflicted tenants,
Those of every sex and station:

It is wove from all the flora,
Woody plants from all creation,
That enhance this situation—
Quite a lot is topographic—
Tinted by a friendly feeling,
Spun and sized with webby tear-drops,
Silken dipped by magic fingers,
After nights of sleepless anguish,
And of days distress'd and clouded
By the palpitating heart-ache

You may never walk half-waking,
Never dream the thoughts of madness,
Never wrestle with the phantom
That would filch your better reason,

Never feel the racking fever
That transfuses all the being
Into tense and heated twingings,
    Burning on your ev'ry vital!

Then grow calmer, when the real
Plainly shows you were bewildered
By some spell, or strange delusion,
Too in-ex-plic-a-ble to mention;
Gives one pause for contemplation,
Fills one full of awe and wonder,
And the people seem quite distant—
    Makes one feel the least bit skeptic.

You may never hear the owlet
That inhabits all these dingles,
Nor imbibe his dismal treble
As he pipes from out the thickets;
Yet a heart in high fandango,
And a mind all fuzz and bluster,
With a fantasy at random,
    Often gropes in trepidation.

You may scout at ghosts and goblins,
Never hear the muffled hoof-beats
Of the Major's steed at midnight,
As he rides in sweeping gallop
Through these walks and varied driveways—
You may call it simple chatter
To indite such wild traditions,
To rehearse the play of demons,
And the clink of worldly sorrow
    From the toilers in the shambles!

And these tales of apparitions,
All these blemished mental pictures,
That mix in these scenes of grandeur,
May not in their lurid rambles
Much disturb your sober moments
With a spectral, weird feeling;
Yet it may be barely certain
That the night-time's sable curtain
Screens behind its folds of darkness
Such and such-like queer cadavers.

You may note the poet's technique,
You may criticise the caprice
That enwraps the inner feelings,
Like the tendrils on the bushes,
Like the brambles—all distorted—
Like the myriad creeping runners,
Fringe the steeps that bound the valleys
And the margins of the highways,
Leading through these Parks of Ginter,
Clear from Lakeside into Richmond.

We would make our words the reflect
Of this artificial shaping,
Where the land falls off in stair-steps,
Esplanades, all curved and terraced,
Boulevards, made up like crescents,
Glens, the base of mimic mountains,
Dells are fashioned in the prairie,
Jungles occupy the niches
Where the birds and nimble conys
Coo and nestle, free from danger.

Crests of curbstone, dressed and jointed,
Battlements of purest granite,
Set in beltings on the hill-tops;
And the trees, if you could name them,
Space in rows and wild disorder—
Some are dwarfed and others giants,
While the buck-eye and the chestnut
Intermix, and shade the lane-ways.

Willow-oaks and weeping maples,
Stately elms and flowered locusts,
Over-top the sweet magnolias;
Trees of acorns, balls and berries,
Ironwoods and mammoth white-oaks,
Candelabras and the holly,
Sourwoods of crimson tassel—
Leaves of ev'ry hue and figure.

And the surface's so constructed
That a subtle rarefaction
Makes the spangled nights delightful,
Makes the day-time all ambrosial;
Moderates the chill in winter,
Fans and cools the breeze in summer,
Equalizes all the currents
With the kisses of the fairies.

Yes, the overhanging umbrage
Makes it pleasant, makes it restful;
While adown yon deep depression
Gushes out a spring of water
That is fam'd throughout this region
As a balm and panacea
For the ails of suff'ring mortals
Who may wish to test its virtues.

Cast your eyes across the woodland,
See the undergrowth all bending,
All the fences gleam with 'suckles;
Here the vines grow in profusion,
They entangle all the wild-wood,
Creeping up the slants and shade-trees
In fantastic shocks and clusters—
All is fragrance and perfum'ry.

Here the shrubs are vastly present,
Some in rows and devious mazes;
Some are decked in modest plumage,
Others bloom in florid paintings;
E'en the trees are flower-flustered,
While the box-woods form pavilions,
And the hedges bend and girdle
Courts and commons, lawns and dwellings—
All along the swelling prospect
Verdure glows in endless tingeings.

Here the punctuated daphne
With precision have been planted;
Hillsides flare with leafy bowers,
Glades stand out in ostentation,
Hollows teem with rustic trappings,
While the zephyrs through the pine-trees
Chant the softest, tender music,
Make their charmful pendents vibrate
With majestic beat and measure—
Seldom find so rare a landscape!

Here the mornings, all effulgent,
Fill the soul with consolation,
As the throngs of feathered minstrels
Sing in siren notes of sweetness;
And these gorgeous, brilliant sunsets
Blaze across the skies in splendor,
Blotting out the stars at ev'ning—
Fascinating all the senses.

Ornate, fring-ed, fulgent, festal,
Festoon'd all and banner-flaming,
All is furbelow and flutter—
Glints of fabl'd nymphs and naiads—
All is tapestry and glitter,
All is redolent and vestal;
All this shade and all this herbage,
All these twining vines and roses,
All these streets and pebbled pathways,
Promenades, in crooks and angles,
Make a scene of ravished beauty—
All, in lustrous regimentals,
Answer to the call of duty.

Here its waters—from afar down—
Are uphoisted, cool and limpid,
And its sick folks soon grow better,
Soon grow well—are re-created,
By the quaffing of this nectar,
And the tonics oft compounded
By the internes and the druggists—
Baths of kindness, rubs of unction—
And the lady in the kitchen!

Princely here the dietetics,
All the platters overflowing;
And the pantry's oft replenish'd
By the crafty major-domo,
From the grocers in the city,
From the bakers and the butchers,
From the dairies and the hucksters,
From the markets and the wagons,
And the well-kept, ample garden.

Almost perfect is the cuisine,
Ranges long, and kept well laden;
Cooks are adepts in preparing
Dishes of delicious flavors,
While the serving is the acme
Of a train'd and peerless Butler,
With alert and mindful waiters—
Ev'ry table's blithe with bouquets,
Deftly set, in trays and baskets—
Marvel of the queenly genius
Carving out these daily menus.

All the rooms are clean and tidy,
Halls kept scrubb'd, and walls kept whiten'd,
Basins rubb'd and bath-rooms polish'd,
Flies kept out by screens and swatters,
Water runs through ev'ry wash-bowl,
Furnaces supply the heating,
All the linen's chang'd each morning—
Ev'rything goes on in order,
Like the timely, changing seasons.

Ev'ry shuttle, through this fabric,
Ev'ry thread of warp and woofing,
All this complicated mixture,
All its ins, and outs, and guidings,
Are directed by the "Expert,"
By the clever "Little Doctor,"
By the lone, peculiar foot-falls
Of that "omnipresent" figure,
Always watching, in these buildings,
Tireless, in his outside scoutings,
Cynosure of all—veracious—
Symphony, between the inmates;
Keeps in rythm all this weaving.

Summary

THIS SKETCH CONTAINS

23 VERSES
214 LINES
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1712 SYLLABLES
6147 CHARACTERS

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